



## What other public transportation programs is WSDOT responsible for?

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The public transportation staff also manages federal grants, provides technical assistance, develops plans, and compiles reports,

### Management of federal public transportation grants

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires the Governor to designate an agency to manage the federal grant programs. The FTA grant management mandate requires the Department to establish management plans for each specific grant program. These plans include identifying the parameters of the program, the eligible recipients and projects, procedures for competitive distribution, application guidelines, and requirements for the receipt and use of the funds.

WSDOT awarded and administered approximately \$7.5 million in federal grants to transportation providers during the grant cycle ending June 30, 2003. The funds provide transit services within and between cities, purchase new buses and other equipment, and provide public transportation service for the elderly and disabled.

### FHWA funds may also be available to transit agencies

Transit agencies may also receive federal funds from the Federal Highway Administration's Surface Transportation Program (FHWA-STP) distributed

through the regional or statewide competitive processes. These dollars are then "flexed" to the FTA and public transportation staff manages the grant contracts in rural areas.

### Examples of FHWA-STP public transportation projects

- the purchase of two buses for Yelm Community Services
- construction of multi-modal transit centers in Sequim and Port Angeles for Clallam Transit
- an overhead pedestrian walkway in Wenatchee for Link Transit.

### Monitoring compliance with federal rules

The public transportation staff is responsible for federal compliance of each grant recipient. This includes: on-site compliance reviews of federal regulations such as labor and Civil Rights laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act; reviewing purchasing criteria and procedures; monitoring inventory control measures; and, ensuring adequate vehicle maintenance plans.

### Oversight of drug and alcohol testing programs

The staff also has the responsibility for regulatory compliance in the area of the FTA Drug and Alcohol testing programs. This requires developing standards, training local agencies,

reviewing policies and procedures, visiting local agencies, and reporting to the federal government on an annual basis.

### **Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) provides training**

The public transportation staff also oversees the federally funded Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP). This program is primarily used for the development of training for rural public transportation and special needs personnel, technical assistance, and peer reviews.

The Department is an active member of the Washington State Transportation Training Coalition, which includes public and private non-profit public transportation agencies. The Coalition identifies training needs and then establishes programs that are offered throughout the state.

### **Specialized transportation grants available to non-profit agencies (FTA Section 5310)**

FTA Section 5310 funds are available to non-profit agencies providing transportation to the elderly and persons with disabilities in urban and rural areas. The annual funding level is subject to congressional appropriation.

If the grant program were funded at the level in the federal transportation authorization law, our program would receive approximately \$1.5 million for 2003. Future funding is subject to the authorization of SAFETEA-21, which expires in September 2003.

The FTA Section 5310 funds are for federal pass-through grants and are not included in the state budget. They are reported as fiduciary funds.

### **Examples of 5310 capital grants to non-profit agencies**

Capital grant funds are distributed through a competitive process and selected agencies must pay 20% of the capital costs. For the 2001-2003 period, approximately \$1.3 million was awarded to purchase wheelchair lift-equipped vehicles for these agencies:

#### **Four paratransit vans** Hopelink

#### **Three 14-passenger minibuses** People For People—Moses Lake

#### **Two 14 to 25-passenger minibuses** People For People—Yakima County Exceptional Foresters, Inc. Special Mobility Services, Inc. Okanogan County Senior Citizens Association, Inc. Paratransit Services—Clallam County Paratransit Services—Kitsap County

#### **One 14 to 25-passenger minibus** Hopelink Career Path Services COAST Kittitas County Action Council Buckley Senior Citizens Yelm Community Services

### **Examples of 5310 Purchased Services**

For 2002, 2003, and 2004, eight areas were selected for purchase of service contracts through FTA Section 5310 operating funds. Agencies were required to show the need for specialized transportation and then establish reimbursable rates.

Approximately \$745,000 is available annually for purchase of service contracts. The following communities provide demand response service for the elderly and persons with disabilities through this program:

\$ 105,000	Senior Services of Snohomish County
\$ 73,000	Kittitas County Action Council
\$ 109,683	Okanogan County Senior Citizens
\$ 122,000	People for People - Grant, Lincoln, and Adams Counties
\$ 120,000	Council on Aging and Human Services
\$ 35,752	Skamania County Senior Services
\$ 150,000	People for People - Yakima County
\$ 29,393	White Pass Community Services

### **Federal capital, operating and planning grants for rural public transportation (Section 5311)**

FTA Section 5311 grants are competitively selected for capital, operating and planning activities for general-purpose public transportation in rural areas. The annual funding level is subject to congressional appropriation.

The anticipated funding level for 2003 projects is approximately \$2.8 million. The federal government requires that 15% of these funds be used for intercity bus programs.

The federal dollars that are pass-through grants are not included in the Department's budget. They are reported as fiduciary funds.

### **Examples of 5311 capital grants**

Local agencies are required to pay 20% local funds on capital projects that are included in this program. Capital grants were awarded to the following agencies for FY 2002:

Link Transit	Three wheelchair-accessible minibuses
Makah Tribal Council	Two bus shelters and equipment
Island Transit	Seven wheelchair-accessible buses and fifteen eight-passenger vanpool vans

### **Examples of 5311 operating grants**

The federal operating grants can pay up to 35% of the operating costs of rural public transportation. Over \$3 million in public transportation operation grants were awarded in 2001-2003 to the following agencies:

\$ 90,578	Okanogan County Senior Citizens Association, Inc.
\$ 3,500	Garfield County
\$ 62,038	Special Mobility Services, Inc.
\$175,216	Northeast Washington Rural Resources Development Association
\$359,376	Klickitat County Senior Services
\$285,101	Pacific Transit System
\$173,480	People For People - Yakima
\$145,500	Kittitas County Action Council
\$138,400	Skamania County Senior Services
\$120,439	Makah Tribal Council
\$120,000	COAST

\$300,000	LINK Transit
\$225,000	Mason County Transit Authority
\$300,000	Valley Transit
\$ 35,150	Jefferson Transit Authority
\$213,675	People For People – Moses Lake
\$300,000	City of Pullman/Pullman Transit

**30-passenger buses cost between \$120,000 and \$240,000 each**

**15-passenger minibuses cost between \$40,000 and \$65,000**

### **Technical assistance to state agencies and local communities**

The public transportation staff works closely and cooperatively with other state agencies and local communities that are interested in exploring public transportation options. Our staff provides guidance on the formation of public transportation authorities, explores coordination opportunities with client-based programs and providers, and responds to citizens' requests for information and direction.

We have provided technical assistance to many communities as they created transit districts since the 1970s and were instrumental in the development of the statewide brokerage framework for Medicaid transportation.

### **Public transportation conference**

WSDOT hosts an annual statewide conference for professional people interested in developments in the public transportation industry. The conference, which started 27 years ago, is one of the oldest public transportation conferences in the country.

WSDOT brings together providers and advocates of transit, passenger rail, and special needs transportation to work side-by-side on important issues. Public transportation staff typically facilitates several of the workshops and training sessions to connect participants with valuable information and resources.

### **Supporting local service providers**

The public transportation staff provides technical assistance in general management, planning, and administrative functions of local service providers.

The staff plays a key role in the “Peer Review” program. This is a voluntary management and performance assessment that provides local public transportation agencies with valuable information on the status of their organization and recommendations for improvement. WSDOT assembles a team of experts to perform on-site reviews and make recommendation to improve performance and service efficiency.

Through a partnership with public transportation agencies, the Public Transportation and Commute Options Office is an active member of the Washington State Transit Training Coalition. In collaboration with public transit agencies and non-profit

transportation providers, a training needs assessment is conducted biennially, and training sessions are established to meet the needs of local agencies.

### **Collaboration with other agencies**

The public transportation staff works closely with other state agencies including Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Employment Security, Department of Health, Department of Community Trade and Economic Development and the Superintendent of Public Instruction on public transportation issues.

Staff is frequently asked to assist in identifying public transportation issues affecting agency clients, provide technical assistance, and participate in problem solving exercises.

### **Examples of our technical assistance**

Examples of technical assistance that public transportation staff provided in 2002 included:

- Hosting the 26th annual Public Transportation Conference September 16-18 in Wenatchee, Washington. Over 500 transportation professionals participated.
- Conducting peer reviews for Jefferson Transit Authority, Whatcom Transportation Authority, and Clallam Transit.
- Providing technical assistance for ACCT to help local communities design more efficient transportation systems.
- Providing guidance to Asotin County officials on public transportation

issues associated with becoming an urbanized area.

- Managing the RTAP program, awarding scholarships, and assisting with the developments of training curriculum for transportation professionals.
- Maintaining a segment of the Department of Transportation's Internet Home Page. Information is provided on current topics, resources, and the grant program at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit).
- Publishing a bi-monthly newsletter, *GrassRoutes*, which is distributed to more than 1,200 individuals to communicate rural transportation issues.
- Reviewing specifications for the purchase of all types of vehicles. Samples of specifications that meet the federal requirements are provided upon request. Assistance is provided in the "request for equals" process.
- Facilitating the specification development for joint bus purchases between agencies and acting as a resource for identifying options on existing agency contracts.
- Performing functions of a "help line" or clearinghouse for information. Staff members receive numerous phone calls and e-mails each day requesting interpretation, information and direction on all topics relating to public transportation. Contacts come from the general public, interested citizen's groups, transit agencies, governmental officials, and private consultants.

## **Public transportation planning and reporting**

Federal and state funds are used to develop and update the long-range *Public Transportation and Intercity Rail Passenger Plan for Washington State*, as well as the various databases, inventories and maps. Required by federal and state law, public transportation data collection and planning are key functions for the public transportation staff.

Local transit plans are reviewed. Each year, local transit agencies prepare six-year transit development plans. These documents outline capital and operating programs, identify significant changes in service and list objectives for meeting the local and state goals. The public transportation staff is responsible for reviewing these plans for consistency and financial feasibility, and the plans are used to report data to the public and the Legislature.

### **Special projects and research on public transportation topics**

In 2002, public transportation staff engaged in research and special projects.

#### **Volunteer Driver's Guide**

Staff led the ACCT workgroup to compile the *Volunteer Driver's—Guide to Best Practices*. Many parts of the state rely heavily on volunteer drivers to transport persons with special transportation needs. As counties developed their coordinated special needs transportation systems, they found that volunteer driver programs might be the key to filling transportation gaps in the community. The comprehensive guide provides information to help

agencies develop and maintain their volunteer driver programs.

#### **Skamania Study**

The Skamania study was funded through a grant from the Rural Transit Assistance Program and administered by the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council. The goal of the study is to create a plan to address current and future Skamania public transportation needs. Through the study, we are seeking creative ways to provide public transportation in a very rural area with an inadequate tax base.

### **Several reports and plans are produced**

Examples of our office's deliverables for planning and reporting include:

- annual transit statistical report-- *Summary of Public Transportation* (RCW 35.58.2796)
- development of state goals, objectives and action strategies for public transportation (RCW 47.06.110)
- needs assessment for public transportation (20-year outlook)
- classification, identification and mapping of statewide intercity corridors of state significance
- data collection and presentation of public transportation facilities and equipment into a geographic information system